

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 20 September 2018

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Transportation and Physical Environment

SUBJECT: Widnes Loops to West Bank Link Road

WARDS: Riverside

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on progress on the Widnes Loops Link Road and junction works and seek approval to proceed in the light of the information provided.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) the Board notes the Chief Executive's use of his Delegated Powers, as outlined in paragraph 3;**
- 3) Council be recommended to approve the increase of Capital funding allocation to ensure the scheme progresses; and**
- 4) the Board approves the use of the SCAPE contract to enable continued progress of the scheme.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In March 2017, Executive Board approved the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus. Further to that, on 22nd February 2018, Executive Board approved the development of the outline Option 5b design to implement a permanent road link between the Mersey Gateway Widnes Loops Roundabout and Victoria Rd / Waterloo Rd / Hutchinson Street junction.

3.2 Since the February report formal discussions and liaison with MGCB and Merseylink has commenced and is ongoing. Part of this process has highlighted the need to depart from the agreed process in relation to the original agreement with Merseylink. If they were to be followed then the existing link road would need to be closed, removed, hard landscaping put in place in line with the Project Agreement and the land handed back to the Council. The Council would then have to remove the hard landscaping, construct the permanent road and then open it. Clearly this

is a time consuming and wasteful process. It does though have its merits in that it minimises risks to the Council as there may be unknown consequences of expediting the transfer of the land on which the temporary road is located.

- 3.3 Despite this and taking all things into consideration it was felt that completing the land transfer quickly was the correct course of action and as the need to take this decision fell during the summer period the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader & Portfolio Holders used his delegated (emergency) powers to agree that this land be transferred back to the Council on 12th September.

To mitigate the risk from contamination, the Council received a letter from MGCB stating that during the time that Merseylink have been occupying the land, no further contamination had taken place.

- 3.4 In the report of the 22nd February 2018, Council approved an amendment to the Capital Programme, at the request of Executive Board, to fund this project subject to further reporting at detailed design stage.

Whilst we haven't reached the end of detailed design yet we do have further indicative costs which are very broad in parts. As such we are looking at a cost range of £3.8 - £5.3M. This includes for items such as land acquisition, full design costs, risk, prelims, inflation, fees, utility diversion costs as well as the construction costs. As this is an increase over the initial authorised budget we require further approval from the Board to proceed.

- 3.5 The SCAPE Framework contract is being utilised to procure the construction works. The Council has previously used this facility for other major works. SCAPE is a public sector owned built environment specialist which has a suite of OJEU compliant frameworks for multiple areas of works. Each of these frameworks has been competitively tendered and awarded to a single winning tenderer respectively. Executive Board's approval is sought to use this SPACE Framework contract to deliver this project.
- 3.6 It is the intention to submit a planning application and continue the joint dialogue with the Framework Contractor and Designers once the Executive Board approval is given as well as complete the detailed design which will allow more accurate costs to be calculated.
- 3.7 More detailed costings from the Utility companies for the diversion works are awaited; currently we have the initial high level estimates from them which are usually slightly more expensive than the final outturn cost so this element shouldn't increase in price.

3.8 The current timeframe for the works is as follows:-

Submit Planning Application	end of September 2018
Public Information Exhibition	October 2018
Gain Planning Approval	mid December 2018
Utility Diversion works including lead in times	November 2018 – November 2019
Construction period	August – December 2019

3.9 Clearly the Utility Diversion works are significantly affecting the programme, however, there is potential for this timeframe to reduce as the detailed estimates are completed and constructive dialogue is carried out between the Utility Site Operations staff, the Contractor and the Council.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Policy Implications were discussed in the previous Executive Board report presented 22nd February 2018 and are reproduced here for clarity

4.2 Delivery of the Widnes Loops to West Bank link road is in accordance with the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus. The link road will help maximise the regeneration, economic and transport benefits of the Mersey Gateway Project.

4.3 In April 2017, a temporary link was opened between Widnes Loop and West Bank as part of a diversion to enable construction of the Widnes approach roads. This temporary link was not constructed to an adoptable standard or with any sense of permanency. It was closed upon the opening of the new Bridge, in accordance with the Project Agreement. Ward Councillor feedback is that the residential and business communities of West Bank found this an attractive route that they would like to see reinstated on a permanent basis. Link road delivery will help improve the quality of life for West Bank communities and provide a further opportunity for access and egress.

4.4 As a significant infrastructure investment, the delivery of the project is a statement of the Council's commitment and ambition for West Bank as a regeneration area. It helps build trust and confidence, laying the foundations for the Council to work with the local residents and businesses and other stakeholders to develop a longer term masterplan and delivery strategy for West Bank. It is also a strong signal to potential investors and developers.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications have been outlined in paragraph 3.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

West Bank is home to one primary school, Widnes Academy. This project will help make West Bank a more attractive place to live and work so helping to support the viability of this provision.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

This project will help stimulate investment and new job opportunities within the West Bank.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

A key consideration as part of the options design appraisal was the need to encourage walking and cycling along Waterloo Road and Victoria Road and thereby complement proposals for the Silver Jubilee Bridge Sustainable Transport Corridor.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Link road delivery will help provide a more resilient transport network and in particular reduce the likelihood of high-sided vehicles striking the low railway bridge over Victoria Road.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Link road delivery forms part of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus and has been identified as a priority connectivity project to help secure the regeneration and renewal of West Bank.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Risk issues have been highlighted in paragraph 3 and particularly relate to the potential costs of the scheme. The February report stated that there would be a further report made to the Executive Board once more detailed information was available. Cost remain the greatest risk to the scheme.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no immediate Equality and Diversity issues arising from this report

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.